

Non-Citizens and the Election

Dieuseul Camille

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. Read the headings in this article. What argument do you think the writer will make about non-citizens and the election?
2. Share what you know about the upcoming election. What is important to you about it?

You Can Participate

If you are not a U.S. citizen, you might think that you can't participate in a U.S. election. But you can! How?

Debate and Discuss

There are many things you can do. You can have debates and discussions. You can set up little meetings with friends. You can talk about the issues that are important to you. You can set up meetings at school, at church, or at work.

Motivate and Support

Also, you can try to motivate your friends who are U.S. citizens to vote. At my job, I have many friends who can vote. I will organize a meeting with them. I will tell them to vote! I will ask them, "Which candidates will do a good job?" I will make sure they register to vote and they know where to go to vote.

You Can Do a Lot

Voting is an *obligation* for all citizens! Even if you cannot vote, there is still a lot you can do. I suggest you help educate people about the issues and make sure that everyone around you votes!

AFTER YOU READ:

1. According to the author, what can non-citizens do to participate in elections?
2. What does *obligation* mean? What do you think about the author's statement that voting is an obligation for all citizens? Read the article on p. 17 for more on voting as an obligation.
3. Read the article on pp. 4-5 (beginner level) or p. 3 (intermediate level) about voting being a right and responsibility. Discuss.

Dieuseul Camille is a student at the Community Learning Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He is from Haiti, and he came to the U.S. in 2014. He thinks that voting is important because he has seen how many bad things can happen in the government and believes that voting helps people choose a good leader who will do the right things. This piece was originally published in "Stand Up and Be Counted," Issue #50.



What Digital Tools Could Dieuseul Use?

He could use communication apps for reaching out to friends to invite them to a meeting.

He could use the internet for learning about the issues.

He could find out about the candidates by looking up their websites and news articles about them on the internet.

He could share links with his community that show them where to register to vote, where to vote, etc.



Voting Is My Obligation

Sheila Mailman

BEFORE YOU READ: What does “obligation” mean? Try using it in several sentences. What obligations do you have?

I Want to Make a Difference

It wasn't until 1954 that Native Americans in the state of Maine were allowed to vote in federal elections. As a full-blooded Native American (Cheyenne, Maliseet, and Penobscot) woman, I see voting as an obligation both to my ancestors and to generations to come.

I want to make a difference by exercising my right to vote and helping others do the same. In my neighborhood, I volunteer to help those who can't read that well, so that they too have the opportunity to vote. I help shut-ins get their absentee ballots, and I campaign for my choices for Congress and governor. I also met our State House representative at the soup kitchen last fall.

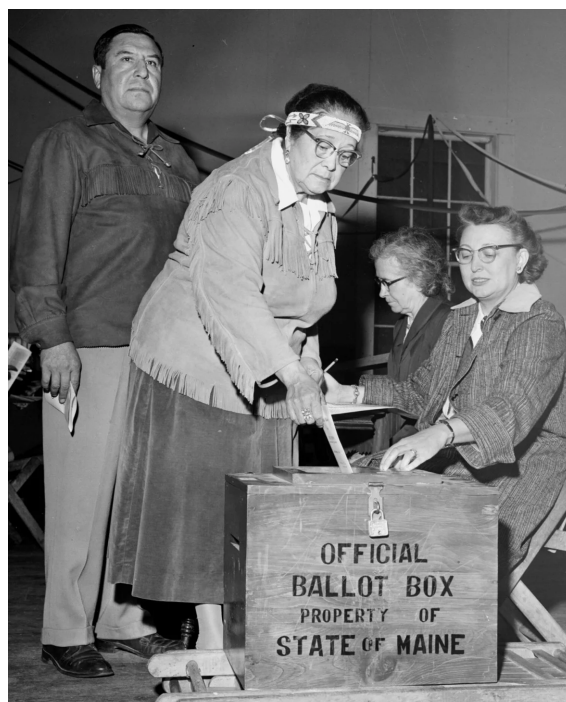
My ABE Class Got Involved

My first voting experience was a result of a group effort in our ABE class. We decided to become active participants in the voting process. In class, we talked with some of the candidates. All of the students in the class voted except for one who is not a U.S. citizen yet.

For some students, their votes were the first in the history of their families. Some of them have lived for two or three generations here in Aroostook County. These students have broken the non-voting trend for themselves and their families.

I Am a Proud Voter

I love to vote. I like the excitement, the rush of people entering and exiting booths, and friends coming and going. It is times like these that I look back and see how far our nation has come.



A member of the Penobscot Indian Tribe votes in 1955. Photo by Danny Maher, Bangor Daily News.

Gender, race, nation of origin, and financial status no longer can be used to determine who can vote. For me, “To vote or not to vote,” is not even a question. It is my obligation to the past, present, and future generations — and I do it proudly.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. How does the author get involved in elections? Be specific. Cite evidence from the text.
2. What are some ways you could get your class or program involved in the election? For ideas, see <https://nelrc.org/vera/>.

This article was reprinted from the “Democracy in Action” issue of The Change Agent, March 2008. Sheila Mailman was a student at Caribou Adult Education in Caribou, Maine. Her Native name is Sleeping Bear.



Register, Learn, Vote, Stay Engaged!

Cynthia Peters

So, you want to vote! Or you want to support someone else to vote. Follow the four steps below. After you read, consider holding a voter registration drive at your program or hold a mock election. Find more resources here: <https://nelrc.org/vera/>.



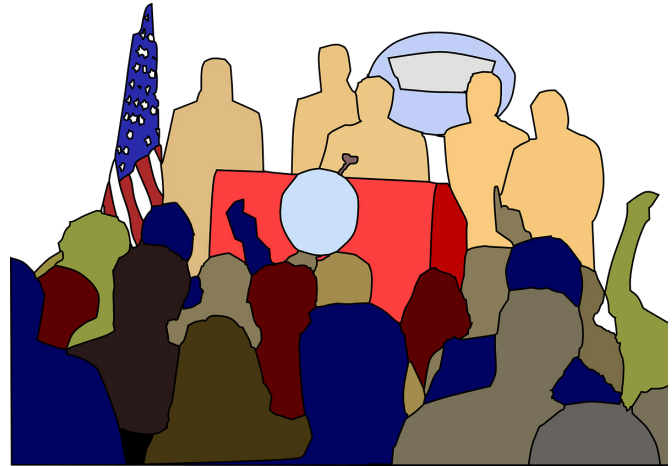
1. Register to Vote

Every state in the U.S. (except North Dakota) requires you to register to vote if you want to vote. Most states allow you to register online.

To register to vote in the U.S., you need to be a citizen and at least 18 years old on election day.

Don't miss the deadline (which is different in every state)! Ask someone who knows or look it up online. Here are some websites that help you figure out how to register:

- <https://www.vote.org/>
- <https://www.rockthevote.org/how-to-vote>



2. Learn about the Issues and the Candidates

Now that you are registered, how will you vote?

Do you have a preference for a certain political party, and will you vote based on the candidate's affiliation with that party?

Or will you study the candidates and vote on the one who is most aligned with you on the issues?

Here are some ways to learn more about the political parties and who is running for office and what they stand for:

- <https://justfacts.votesmart.org/>
- <https://www.diffen.com/>



3. Vote in Person or by Mail

Learn about how to vote in your state. If you vote in person, where is your polling place?

Can you vote by mail? If so, how? (You may need to apply for a mail-in ballot.) If you are voting by mail, don't wait until the last minute to send in your ballot.

Support others to get their ballot in the mail or to go to the polls on election day. If it is safe to do so, give rides to the polls or volunteer at the polls.

Use your phone and social media to remind people to vote and to connect them with resources they might need to be able to vote.



4. Stay Engaged

Voting should not be something we do every few years and then forget about it. Once candidates are elected, they need to keep hearing from us. You can be sure that they hear from special interest groups that try to convince them to vote one way or another on legislation.

You, too, should put ongoing pressure on your elected officials to vote the way you want them to. Stay engaged!

- Contact your legislator and let them know how you feel about an issue.
- Join a community organization that is working on an issue you care about.
- Participate in actions and protests that show how you feel about an issue.

Cynthia Peters is the editor of The Change Agent.